

**TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, RI**  
**Comprehensive Community Plan Amendment**  
**Ordinance # 2004-10-27 A**

The following amendments are to the Land Use Element and the Economic Development Element of the Portsmouth Comprehensive Community Plan:

**LAND USE ELEMENT**

**I. DEFINITIONS**

- A. GROWTH MANAGEMENT
- B. EXURBAN
- C. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS
- D. ROLLING GROWTH CAP
- E. BASE ZONING DISTRICT**

This is the existing zoning based on an official zoning plan and parcel-by-parcel listing in the Zoning Ordinance, which dictates things like general type of use (residential, commercial, etc.), densities (minimum lot size), and setbacks (of buildings from streets and other property lines). Portsmouth's Base Zoning Districts are as follows:

**RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS ...**

**COMMERCIAL DISTRICT C-1** is established to provide areas for commercial establishments and serve community and town-wide shopping and service needs.

**TOWN CENTER DISTRICT – TC** is established to provide for a pedestrian-friendly commercial district that is more densely developed than the Commercial C-1 zone. While allowing mixed uses and planned unit developments, this district is more restrictive than the C-1 district in terms of discouraging or prohibiting uses that are not conducive to its purpose. Other than prohibited uses, all proposed uses in the TC district are subject to special use permits and design review.

**INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS ...**

**HEAVY INDUSTRIAL I-H ...**

**LIGHT INDUSTRIAL I-L ...**

**WATERFRONT DISTRICT WD ...**

**OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC LANDS OS ...**

**III. LAND USE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

- A. CURRENT LAND USE PATTERNS
- B. LAND USE CATEGORIES

**Residential Land Uses**

...

**Commercial Land Uses**

Portsmouth does not have a lot of retail and commercial development, primarily since nearby Fall River, Middletown and Newport have historically had major concentrations. Most retail tends to be oriented toward specialized products and services serving the local community. However, the advent of the Internet seems to have given rise to businesses that need not be in a central location and prefer the less urban environment that Portsmouth provides. Included

in the category of commercial land uses are retail sales, offices, consulting services and personal/ professional services. The original zoning in Portsmouth unfortunately zoned for strip commercial development just one lot deep along certain portions of East Main Road. Rapid residential development behind these commercial lots severely limits the ability to create any sort of retail “town center” without significant property acquisition.

The only opportunity to develop a “town center” exists in the corridor along East Main Road from just north of Freeborn Street south to the Town Hall. The northern half of this area is the key retail/service opportunity, because of its location at or near the very busy intersection of East Main Road and Turnpike Avenue, and because the only larger commercially zoned lots are here. Thus, this Plan calls for the creation of a Town Center district in this area.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan does not propose any major changes in land use patterns, but instead seeks to guide the development of the Town in a manner that is consistent with the principles that are set forth in this Plan.

### A. LAND ALLOCATION

1. ... The strip nature of these commercial zones is unfortunate, but both the commercial and adjacent residential parcels are largely built out, so little can be done to correct the problem through changes in the Future Land Use Plan. However, the incorporation of a “Town Center District” herein should help concentrate the locally-oriented retail/service opportunities.

### B. ZONING CHANGES

The following changes in the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance ...

1. Inconsistency between Future Land Use Plan and Zoning: ...
2. Industrial Area: ...
3. Zone Military Property as follows: ...
4. Resource Protection Overlay Districts ...
5. Create a new “Town Center District” for retail/service uses in the area generally from Freeborn Street to Hargraves Drive. Such district would be subject to a greater degree of land use control and design review guidance than in other commercial districts.
6. Incorporate detailed design review guidelines for commercial development, as well as apartment, condominium and town house developments. Architectural styles, design themes, and site details including signs, lighting, pedestrian furniture, planting and paving, along with building materials, colors, textures and grade shall be compatible within the overall site design and shall preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area. These details should blend with their surroundings to create a diverse, yet unified, street composition.

-----

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

### VI. IMPLEMENTATION

#### A. GUIDELINES FOR COMPATIBLE USES

#### B. REGULATORY INITIATIVES

- i. Encourage diverse industrial developments ...
- ii. Encourage "Home Occupations" or "Cottage Industries" ...
- iii. Incorporate specific hazardous materials limits into zoning statutes.
  1. Require landscaping and encourage aesthetic frontal appearance of all new commercial and industrial development...
- iv. Carefully zone for desirable industrial and commercial uses. (See Land Use Element V.A.)
  1. The permitted uses list in the zoning ordinance should be those we wish to attract.
  2. Prohibited uses should be those we do not wish to attract.
- v. Create a new "Town Center District" for retail/service uses in the area generally from Freeborn Street to Hargraves Drive. Such district would be subject to a greater degree of land use control and design review guidance than in other commercial districts. It would encourage the coordination of adjacent developments to engender an atmosphere of a walkable town center. It would also permit greater density, encourage buildings to be located near the street with parking to the side and behind, and permit some residential development within a Planned Unit Development.
- vi. Incorporate detailed Design Review Guidelines for commercial development. Architectural styles, design themes, and site details including signs, lighting, pedestrian furniture, planting and paving, along with building materials, colors, textures and grade shall be compatible within the overall site design and shall preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area. These details should blend with their surroundings to create a diverse, yet unified, street composition.

\ APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL  
ACTION ON OCTOBER 27, 2004.

---

Kathleen Viera Beaudoin, Town Clerk